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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM PINR IZ
SUBJECT: CHALABI OUTLINES HIS POPULAR COMMITTEE
MOBILIZATION PLANS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel Speckhard for reasons 1.4
 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ahmed Chalabi is moving forward on the
political mobilization component of the new Baghdad Security
Plan, although he suggested he is having some difficulty
achieving full Sunni participation and has asked for Embassy
assistance. His plan consists of creating tiered committees
at the neighborhood and district levels which will provide
assistance to security forces, help deliver essential
services, and provide a channel for security-related
information. He also indicated that the political parties
will have a significant role in the creation of the
committees but that they will ultimately be non-political
entities. End Summary.

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Bringing People Together for Popular Mobilization
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¶2. (SBU) Ahmed Chalabi, as the co-chair of the popular
mobilization component of the new Baghdad security
initiative, told DCM on February 1 that he has been meeting
over the past week with former senior Ba'ath part military
intelligence officers, Sunni IIP representatives Naseer
al-Ani and Ayad Sammraie, and Sadrist and JAM representatives
to form a plan to implement what he has dubbed 'popular
committees' in Baghdad. He also met with Baghdad Deputy
Mayor Naeem Aboub (Sadrist) and the 'mayor' of Sadr City,
Raheem Al-Darraji, to secure their participation in the
process. He said he will continue with an aggressive meeting
schedule over the coming weeks to designate formal staff and
to finalize details of the plan.

Three Objectives for Popular Committees

¶3. (SBU) Chalabi has identified three main objectives for
the popular committees. First, committees should facilitate
the work of security forces in each of the nine security
areas. To do so, these committees will coordinate with local
commanders and provide assistance in 'easing the burden' of
searches, as well as providing a mechanism for delivering
assistance or compensation to individuals impacted by
security activities in their neighborhoods.

¶4. (SBU) Second, the local committees will assess and report
on local community requirements for essential services and
public needs, and will also seek to expedite delivery of
those services. He also mentioned that the popular
committees will provide assistance to displaced persons in
each security area. Chalabi made particular mention of
efforts to improve local electrical generation in target
areas as an essential component of the committees.

¶5. (SBU) Third, the committees will provide a mechanism for
locals to provide security information to security forces.

Chalabi indicated that people feel it is too risky at present
to provide sensitive information to forces perceived as
having possible sectarian biases.

Committee Structure is Still Unclear

¶6.   (SBU) Chalabi's envisioned structure for these committees
is still under development, but he described the following
basic framework. Within each of Baghdad's nine security
sectors, committees would be formed at the mahalla
(neighborhood) level, headed up by the existing mukhtar
(local mayor) with one additional member selected per
thousand dwellings in the neighborhood. Chalabi did not
explain how additional members would be selected.

¶7.   (SBU) Each of these local committees would report to a
committee at the sector or district level, which in turn
would report to a single coordination committee with links to
other GOI and coalition entities. Chalabi was uncertain
which set of administrative boundaries the mobilization
program should use - citing the conflicting governorate
administrative lines, the security boundaries, and the
essential services boundaries as evidence of the confusing
local layout. He requested clarification as to which
boundaries he should be using for planning purposes, stating
the importance of synchronizing the security, reconstruction,
and mobilization components of the new plan.

¶8.   (SBU) Chalabi did not explain how the popular committees
will interface, if at all, with existing government
institutions. Chalabi suggested that there would be around
200 local committees; PRT staff noted that the city has more
than 400 mahallas, suggesting potentially many more

committees than Chalabi envisioned.

Parties Will Play a 'Strong Role'

¶9.   (SBU) When asked about the role of the political parties
in the creation of popular committees, Chalabi said that in
areas where a given party has a 'strong role,' they would
play a significant part in the creation of committees, but
that the committees themselves would remain politically
neutral. He mentioned that he had held productive
conversations on the subject with SCIRI and IIP senior
leadership, both of whom he said support the plan. (Note:
SCIRI has been advocating for local neighborhood security
groups for more than a year and has taken some steps to
introduce them in the past. End Note.) At a February 2 BSP
Executive Steering Committee (ESC) meeting (septel), Chalabi
also clarified that the popular committees would not be
armed.

¶10. (SBU) Chalabi also mentioned several initiatives he
would like to see linked to the mobilization effort. He
explained that providing diesel generators to support
selected local electrical grids in target areas would have a
powerful effect for a sub-$100M price tag. He requested
Embassy assistance in securing broader Sunni participation in
the mobilization effort, saying that their current level of
involvement was not sufficient.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Chalabi's proposed initiative is the only systematic
thinking we have seen about how to reach out to the Baghdad
public about BSP, and solicit their feedback.   The
inclusion of several essential services provisions in his
plan suggests the need for additional coordination between
the mobilization and services component of the larger plan
covered in DPM Zowbaie's service support committee.
Chalabi's apparent lack of experience in working with the

existing local government institutions has meant that much of
his plan appears to bypass existing Neighborhood Advisory
Council/District Advisory Council (NAC/DAC) structures,
structures that the USG has sought to build up and support.
Success of his plan will require further efforts to include
existing entities to avoid a backlash from provincial
government institutions. The ambiguity surrounding the role
that political parties will play in the committee formation
process suggests that popular committees risk falling prey to
sectarian agendas.

¶12. (C) Chalabi's appointment to this important role is also
noteworthy. Apart from his position as head of the
de-Ba'athification Commission, he is not a member of the GOI
in any official capacity, nor does he seem to enjoy a broad
base of popular support in Baghdad. In his tenure as head of
the De-Ba'athification Commission, he has not demonstrated an
ability to reach across sectarian lines. END COMMENT.
KHALILZAD